(c) whether the contact persons to whom the heroin was to be delivered in Mumbai have been identified;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the action taken against the Air India Commander?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF THE FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : Yes, Sir. 1080 gms of Heroin valued at Rs. 2.16 lakhs at illicit market rate was seized on 9.10. 1997 from a Senior Air India Commander when he was leaving by flight No. AI-101 from Mumbai to New York. Available report indicate that the country of origin of Heroin is India and the country of destination was USA.

(c) and (d) Investigation reveal that the heroin was not to be delivered in Mumbai.

(e) The Air India Commander involved in the case has been arrested and remanded to judicial custody.

Diamond Processing Project

485. DR. M. JAGANNATH:
SHRIMATI LAKSHMI PANABAKA:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have accorded its approval to set up four units including Diamond Project in the Visakhapatnam Export Processing Zone;

(b) if so, the total investment involved in this project;

(c) whether the Diamond Processing Unit is to be set up by the World-wide Diamond Manufacturing Private Limited, for processing imported rough diamonds; and

(d) the estimated export of diamonds from this project?

THE MINISTER OF STATE THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (DR. BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH) : (a) and (b) Four recently approved projects for establishment in Visakhapatnam Export Processing Zone includes a diamond processing project with a projected investment of Rs. 11.83 crores.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) Estimated exports of Rs. 753.45 crores have been projected by the unit over a period of five years from the commencement of commercial operations.

GPF Contributions

486. SHRI L. RAMANA : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the reasons for ceiling in G.P.F. contributions for Central Government servants;

(b) whether the Government propose to relax the ceiling to enable the Government servants to deposit the arrears due to them on account of Fifth Pay Commission Report in the interest of economic stability in the country; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) The ceiling in GPF contributions for Central Govt. servants has been prescribed in GPF (CS) Rules. 1960 which provides that the amount of subscription may be any sum not less than 6 per cent of the emoluments and not more than the total emoluments of an employee.

(b) The proposal to allow voluntary deposit of arrears due to Government Servants on account of acceptance of the recommendations of Fifth Pay Commission into GPF is under consideration.

(c) Question does not arise.

Housing Finance Companies

487. DR. KRUPASINDHU BHOI : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Housing Finance Companies operating in the country both in public as well as in the private sector, State-wise;

(b) the rate of interest paid on deposits and the rate of interest charged by them on housing loan given to the individuals;

(c) whether the norms have recently been revised; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) National Housing Bank (NHB) has reported that as per information available with them there were 389 Housing Finance Companies (HFCs) as on 10th November, 1997 whose State-wise details are given in the Statement attached.

(b) to (d) The interest rates on public deposits charged by HFCs are governed by the Housing Finance Companies (NHB) Directions, 1989. In terms of these, the minimum rate of interest on such deposits is 10 per cent per annum while the maximum rate of interest is 15 per cent per annum with effect from 1st November, 1995. With effect from 14th March, 1997, NHB has been relaxing the ceiling on the rate of interest on deposits to be offered by HFCs with net owned fund of Rs. 50 lakh and above, on a case to case basis.

The rate of interest charged by HFCs on housing loans extended to individuals are determined by HFCs themselves. The latest rates of interest in respect of HFCs approved by the NHB for the purpose of refinance vary at present between 12 per cent to 19 per cent.